

**A special note from Beecher Hunter:** *My career at Life Care comes to a close today, and below is the final offering in a succession of daily Perspectives that began in 2002. These messages were intended to provide hope, encouragement and a celebration of blessings to those of you who work in a demanding, yet personally rewarding, field of healthcare services. It is my prayer that you have found at least a few of them to be meaningful. Appreciation goes to Dara Carroll, who has been a partner with me in editing, formatting and illustrating these pieces over the years.*

## ‘Son, What Have You Learned?’



Education of their sons was always important for my parents, and especially for my mother. She was denied the opportunity to attend school beyond the eighth grade. The reason? Her father died suddenly at the age of 42, and one month later, her mother also passed away. That left her, as the oldest of the siblings, with the task of raising a brother and two sisters. With some help from others, she took on that responsibility.

On my first day of school, entering the first grade at Seventh Street School in Cookeville, Tennessee, my mother walked me the half-mile to the schoolhouse, introduced me to the principal, and said: “Son, you be a good boy, and listen to the teacher.”

That afternoon, upon my return home, she said, “Son, what did you learn today?” I recited names of some new friends, told her about recess, and some of the books the teacher discussed. Often, from that day on and through high school, the question would often be the same: “Son, what did you learn today?”

When I was a junior in high school, she announced to the family that she would seek a job outside the home so that her sons (now three in number) could all attend college. No one in our family had ever attended college. On occasion, she would supplement the money I earned from two part-time jobs to help with college expenses. And when I proudly walked across the stage at Tennessee Tech with a diploma, she was at the head of the line to greet me and hug me.

Later, at home, she asked the inevitable question: “Son, what did you learn in college?” My response? “Well,” I summed it up, “I learned how little I know about a lot of things, but I came to understand how to find the answers.”

(more)

Today at 5 p.m., as I walk away from Life Care, I'm convinced that somewhere in heaven, my mother is wondering, "Son, what did you learn in 34 years at Life Care?" It is an appropriate question. I can tell her that I learned ...

- Life Care is a God-ordained company. He planted the vision for it in the mind of Forrest Preston, and God has had His good hand on it since.
- Our Lord is still in the miracle-working business. I've seen situations in which He intervened on behalf of our company when no other explanation was plausible.
- There is no nobler mission than loving God and showing it by serving His frail, infirm and vulnerable children.
- A transcendence of selfish desires – a yielding of one's own will to the welfare of another first and foremost – is present among our associates.
- Many on the front lines possess an innate ability for turning tears into laughter, for bringing ease to pain, for converting unhappiness to joy.
- A conviction prevails that a person who comes into our purview becomes part of our family and is treated as such. We become their friends when they have no friends; kinfolks when they have no kinfolks.
- Genuine grief and pain appear on the faces and in the hearts of those who serve when death takes away the one they've cared for.
- A personal bond of endearment established with so many residents – like Mary Denton of East Ridge, the lady in our logo; the wisecracking Nyleptha Roberts of Sparta, who lived to be 112; Peg Stearns of Wilbraham, who at age 109 called to pray for me and all the caregivers across our company; the wit and wisdom of Claude (Mr. Life Care) Ogle.
- Undefinable appreciation for associates who inspire me by their selfless acts of care and service – like Donna White Sykes of Ridgeview Terrace, who reunited a dying resident with her long-lost son; Bethany Sattovia, a speech therapist at The Westchester House, who on her own time taught a short-term patient how to read and write; Yulonda Jones, a certified nursing assistant at The Meadows in Fork Union, Virginia, who took a newly bought outfit for her daughter back to the store and exchanged it for clothes for a boy with cerebral palsy living in her facility to wear on his first day of school; and the thousands of others I've had the pleasure of meeting.
- The devotion to Life Care's mission that my wife, Lola, shared with me; her eagerness to travel with me to corporate functions and to facilities where she loved to engage residents in their stories.
- The extraordinary value of the corporate leadership team with whom I have had the opportunity to work – men and women who truly place our residents and patients as the highest priority in support provided to the field, and who recognize our associates as our most valuable resource in delivery of care and service.
- The worth beyond measure of a co-laborer in this office by the name of Kelly Wilcoxon, whose support, prayers and counsel provided wisdom and encouragement.
- The vision, the faith, and the determination of Forrest Preston to overcome all obstacles to meet the needs of seniors.
- A deep sense of humility and gratitude that God presented me with a career beyond anything I could ever have hoped for or dreamed of.

Mama, this is what I've learned at Life Care. This is what I'll tell you when I get home.

– Beecher Hunter